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ABSTRACT

This report provides information on school community based management (SCBM) as a process for school improvement and as applied to schools on the island of Chuuk (formerly, Truk). It involves everybody within a school's community, including mayor, principal, teachers, church leaders, traditional leaders, parents, and students. As a cooperative system of local management, it allows a school greater flexibility in adjusting state rules and policies to meet the needs of the community. Some basic beliefs behind SCBM are that members of the community have the skills and the ability to decide what is best for their students, that the school community has a better idea of what is good for the school than people far away, that persons affected should share in the decisions that are made, and that students will learn more and learn better if everyone shares in their roles and responsibilities. Steps are described for starting and maintaining SCBM. The SCBM organizational model usually used in Hawai'i is also described. Considering that much of Chuuk cultural values revolve around fishing and its supporting activities, SCBM allows for the inclusion of fishing techniques, and fishing net weaving, among other relevant skills, into the curriculum. (RT)

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A Practitioner's Guide to School Community Based Management (SCBM)

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By Keres Petrus*

July 2001

My year-long project at PREL has been to learn about School Community Based Management (SCBM) and how it applies to Chuuk. It is with the assistance, collaboration, and flexibility of everyone around me that I am able to put together this brief report. I find that more study needs to be done, since SCBM is very challenging, but I believe that it can meaningfully meet the needs of the school system in Chuuk, and perhaps school systems in other places too.

When I look into the concept of SCBM, I see it resembling the parts of a house. Every part of the house has a function and every person in SCBM has a function. Someone must be the column (wúúr), someone must be the rafter (woo), someone must be the beam (tinééw), and someone must be the roofing (óós). Without the contribution of every part and person, the group will find it difficult to reach its goals. It is essential that every part function as it should.

My report gives information on SCBM and asks questions about our beliefs. I'm learning that in order to implement SCBM, we must share some beliefs about people, relationships, and how we make decisions. I am always eager to acquire more and more knowledge about SCBM to improve our future. I hope this report is helpful for Chuuk and other school systems that see a need for more community involvement in education.

Kinissou chapwuur.
Keres Petrus

What Is SCBM?

SCBM is a school improvement process that involves all the people within a school's community. In Chuuk, the school community includes the mayor, principal, teachers, church leaders, traditional leaders, parents, students, and others. SCBM changes the way the state school system and the school work together, and it changes the way the school operates in the community.

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As we look into the structure of our educational system today in Chuuk and in many other places, we realize that the school system is based on an adult-to-child relationship. What is the role of an adult to a child or parent to a child? The role of an adult is to tell, to protect, to provide, and to lead. In our educational system at the state level, the school system is the adult and the schools are the children. At the community level, in terms of education, the school principal is the adult, and the parents are the children. Is this the best way to work together for the benefit of our children?

The SCBM structure is based on an adult-to-adult relationship. SCBM's collaborative approach places value on the opinions of other people. A relationship between adults emphasizes collaboration, sharing ideas, understanding, and respecting diversity. Everyone has a contribution to make that will support and develop our children's education. Do we believe that?

SCBM is a cooperative system of local school management that allows schools a greater level of flexibility. Flexibility means that the school can bend state rules and policies to meet the needs of the community. For instance, our school system in Chuuk sets the school calendar for all the schools throughout the year. Every school begins in August and ends in June. SCBM flexibility could allow each school to set its own calendar. School calendars could begin and end on different dates, depending on what is best for the community.

The purpose of SCBM is to improve the quality of education by empowering each school's community. The state retains the primary responsibility for education, but the community also takes responsibility for making and implementing decisions that will directly affect its members, especially its students.

Changes in the Decision-Making Process

SCBM establishes new ways to make decisions. It shifts some of the decision-making authority away from a centralized agency or department, and gives it instead to individual schools. As in other centralized systems, educational policies in Chuuk give the Director of Education the authority to implement all the policies established by the state for the governance of the educational system. The Board of Education acts in an advisory capacity, giving advice and counsel to the Director. There is no place under the present system for the community to give direction to their children's education. In contrast, SCBM sets up a school council at each school and gives it authority to make some decisions at the school level.

The relationship between an SCBM school and the state government has to be worked out carefully. The state will always keep a lot of control over the schools, but SCBM establishes a way for the community to share the control. For example, now the Chuuk state government requires 180 days of school in a school year, and every school must follow the same calendar. Even with SCBM, the state will probably insist that all schools remain open 180 days. But, as mentioned before, SCBM schools may be able to change the dates to meet specific purposes.

Everyone concerned with education—the state, the school, and the community—must be both responsible and accountable for improving education. Under SCBM, all these stakeholders become partners in educating the children. In order for every stakeholder to be a true partner, it must understand its roles and responsibilities very clearly. Otherwise, there can be problems and misunderstandings. For example, it must be clear which policies are flexible and which are not. The schools must understand that state laws must still be followed. Using the situation in Chuuk as an example, the following paragraphs describe several areas in which implementation of SCBM would require new definitions for roles and responsibilities in both the state and the local schools.

Personnel. Now all teachers are hired by the Chuuk State School System (CSSS), paid by the CSSS, and responsible to the CSSS. Will SCBM make it possible for the community to hire and fire teachers? Perhaps, but before SCBM can operate successfully, the roles of the CSSS and of the community regarding personnel must be clearly understood by everyone. Any changes in the roles of the school system and the schools need to be very carefully defined in order to avoid misunderstandings.

Curriculum, instruction, and assessment. CSSS policies tell the schools how many days to teach, what subjects to teach at each grade level, and what books to use. The CSSS provides curriculum frameworks that enumerate performance expectations within each subject area by grade level. Will this change under SCBM? The CSSS must set its rules regarding curriculum and instruction very clearly. Then the local school committees will know what they can and cannot change.

The CSSS presently has a standard report card and uses the Junior High School Entrance Test system-wide. SCBM could provide the flexibility for schools to develop their own report cards or to set their own assessment systems.

Budgeting. Right now, the Business Manager coordinates with the Chuuk State Department of the Treasury on finance and budget control. Each school submits its needs to the Business Office, and the Business Manager manages the schools' budgets. SCBM would give budgeting responsibility to each school. Each school would receive funds from the state government and break the budget down to respond to the needs of the school. How much freedom an SCBM school can have with its budget is something that must be decided by negotiations at the state level. Money is always a potential troublemaker, so everyone must understand the regulations about its use very well.

Facilities. There are a number of problems in regard to facilities. The major problem is the tropical location of the schools. Many of Chuuk's high schools and outer-island schools are directly exposed to the ocean with its high salt content. Of almost equal importance is the lack of established maintenance and long-term construction programs to accommodate the expected large increase in enrollment. This has primarily been due to the lack of funds, but is also a holdover from the time of the Trust Territory Government, when few capital improvement funds or maintenance programs were established.

The condition of a school's facilities—the maintenance of the building, the availability of water and restrooms—is a major concern for parents. It is also an area in which SCBM can be particularly effective. However, the roles and responsibilities for maintenance and facilities improvement must be clearly defined from the beginning so that arguments can be avoided later.

Changes in the Way the Schools Operate in the Community

SCBM also changes traditional administrative roles and relationships within a school. Now in Chuuk, the school principal is responsible to the Director to implement the prescribed course of studies authorized for the students. SCBM increases school-level authority through shared decision making and requires the collaborative involvement of the principal, teachers, students, support staff, parents, and other community members. SCBM involves more people and allows them to participate in school decision making.

Currently, the principal makes the majority of decisions for the school. In SCBM a council is involved in making the decisions. The council is made up of representatives of the whole community and may include the mayor, principal, teachers, church leaders, traditional leaders, parents, and others. The members of the council make decisions through discussion and agreement. The leadership

of the council is decided upon by the group. The leader may be another council member. This is when an adult-to-adult relationship is effective. Each council member puts away his or her title and talks adult-to-adult to reach consensus.

Here is an example of shared decision making. In the school system now the principal may decide to have a school uniform, and he may select blue as the uniform color. Blue may not be the students' preferred color. Since students are the ones who will wear the uniform, they may want to have a say in the color of the uniform. The parents will pay for the uniform, so they may want to share their opinions about the school uniforms. Teachers may also have their own ideas, and there may be a sewing business in the school community that would be interested in giving input.

In SCBM, people with an interest in uniforms would be given an opportunity to participate in the decision making. Because they are involved, it will be easy for them to respect and contribute to a discussion about the school uniform. SCBM's collaborative approach values the opinions of other people. Everyone has a different point of view that can contribute to the system.

Some Basic Beliefs Behind SCBM

Members of the community have the skills and the ability to decide what is best for their students. Most of the people in Chuuk believe that "fearing the Lord is the beginning of Knowledge." Learning about the Bible is one of the most significant aspects of life in Chuuk. In almost every community, people meet together to learn about the Word of God. The past generations learned how to read using the Bible, as it was the only reading material available. Our elders and parents believe that their children can learn more by reading the Bible. SCBM offers the community the opportunity to discuss how using the Bible and formal education in the schools can support each other.

The school community has a better idea of what is good for the school than people far away. People in Chuuk value fishing. There are many ways of fishing in Chuuk. Some ways are designed for men and some for women. This involves having many skills. For example: One must have the skills of knitting fishing nets and weaving baskets and hats for fishing. One must learn about the moon in order to know when to fish. One must also learn the names of fishes, places to fish, and about plants and the weather. Learning about fishing involves learning more and more skills. These skills are important not just to survive in the community, but to learn how to relate cultural skills to other concepts. SCBM allows the school community to participate in deciding what teaching strategies would be best for students. If a school community believes that it is important for students to learn about fishing, the community can include fishing in the curriculum. This is an example of cultural values and how a community is better able to make decisions about cultural values for a school than people who are far removed from the community. People far away from Chuuk may think learning to use a computer is more important than learning how to fish.

Persons affected should share in the decisions that are made. Let us look back to the decision of having a school uniform. The principal thinks that it is a good idea to have a school uniform. But many others are affected by the decision. Parents will pay for the uniform, students will wear the uniform, and someone else will sew the uniform. The teachers and the community need to understand the purpose of having school uniforms so that the decision is respected and everyone understands their role in decision making.

If everyone shares in the roles and responsibilities, students will learn more and learn better. Accountability is an issue that needs to be addressed. Accountability means being clear on who has the responsibility for what happens. This is a delicate matter because the community is involved, and

ultimately the educators have the responsibility to ensure that students get the best education possible. Still, the community role in the SCBM system is to promote, to support, to manage, to govern, and to facilitate the education of our children.

How to Begin SCBM

In Chuuk, the CSSS must decide on the procedures schools must follow in order to start the SCBM process. First, what SCBM will look like in Chuuk must be carefully defined. Then, information must be shared with communities. Procedures must be established that say how a school can become a SCBM school, and each school council has to agree on rules that regulate how it works with the school and the CSSS.

SCBM has been operating in Hawai'i for several years. Their process is a model to look at as other systems decide how to move ahead toward SCBM. The following is a description of the way the State of Hawai'i set up its SCBM schools.

State Task Force. A lot of time was spent at the beginning to determine what communities and the Hawai'i Department of Education (HIDOE) wanted SCBM to look like. What would be the new roles and responsibilities? What would the HIDOE continue to do, and what new responsibilities would be given to the schools? Were there policies that would need to be changed to allow for SCBM? Were there laws that needed to be changed, and who could change them? Hawai'i found that there were a lot of issues that needed to be addressed before SCBM could be implemented.

Community organization. Communities in Hawai'i had to be educated about SCBM. Some people liked it, but others did not. The idea of a school council running a school was new. The communities had to come together to decide who could do it and how they would organize themselves into an effective school council.

Information sharing and training. When a community expressed interest in SCBM, the state and community representatives met to share their ideas. For SCBM to be successful, both the state and local communities must understand clearly what is possible and what the obligations would be.

Training was needed to help everyone understand the process of shared decision making and collaboration. Part of this training helped people learn how to plan and conduct effective meetings. Resource people were chosen to help schools with the training and start-up of SCBM.

Letter of intent. When a school community understands SCBM and wants to apply for SCBM status, the school must submit a letter of intent to the HIDOE. The letter must include:

- evidence of meeting or minutes of the meetings,
- the number of persons present,
- summaries of discussions,
- how consensus to ask for SCBM status was reached,
- a proposal to implement SCBM.

Proposal to implement SCBM. This proved to be the most difficult part of the SCBM process in Hawai'i, because it required careful thinking about what the school should do and how it would run. The purpose of the proposal is to allow the community to think carefully about the school's educational program. Writing the proposal requires participation of all the stakeholders who will be part of the school council.

In Hawai'i, every school is expected to develop a school improvement plan. For schools that want to implement SCBM, this plan is written so that it becomes the proposal to implement SCBM. For SCBM schools, the plan must have the following parts: vision, belief statement, goals and objectives, request for staff development and training, budget, description of decision-making body or organizational model, possible problems and solutions, and possible waivers and exceptions.

Vision. The school vision is what the community wants the school to look like in the future. This step has a very important effect on the way the school will operate. Let me give you an example.

During my year at PREL, I had a great opportunity to volunteer in a first grade reading class at Kapalama Elementary School. Kapalama is a SCBM School, and from my first visit I was very impressed with the behavior of the students. I was curious and I asked the principal, "What makes the kids behave so well?" Her answer was very informative and shows how powerful a school vision can be.

The principal said, "Our children are well behaved because it is part of our school vision. We expect our kids to behave well, but we realize we have to make it happen. We take small steps and teach them by our example. Everywhere they go, the staff greet them and treat them very nicely to show them how to be good students. And the parents do the same at home. It takes time to train them, but when you start with them when they first come to the school, they pick it up easily. Beginning with kindergarten and continuing all the way up, we say hello to them and treat them politely on campus and discipline them in the classroom. We believe that if we don't discipline the students, learning cannot take place.

"Everyone has the same vision to take our students where we want them to be. The school and the community set up their vision for the school, and everyone is working toward that vision. First you imagine what you want your school to be like, then you work to make it happen. Our vision for Kapalama is to create a community of learners who believe, achieve, and succeed."

I was so thrilled to step on a school campus that shows how the school and community work together to make a good school. When the school and the community have the same idea about what the school should be, they can make that vision come true.

Belief statement. The belief statement tells what the community thinks about education and the role of the school. What is the purpose of education? What is the role of the school?

Goals and objectives. When the community determines what it wants the school to look like and identifies a purpose, the school council can set up goals and objectives that will ensure that the school will become what the community wants it to be.

Request for staff development and training. The community knows its teachers and what they need to learn in order to reach the goals and objectives of the school. The teachers and community decide together what type of staff development and training is best for the school. The staff-development plan becomes part of the SCBM implementation plan.

Budget. The principal and the school council have a good idea how much money it will take to run the school. Their budget planning becomes part of the SCBM implementation plan. In the budget, the plan must show how the funds requested are necessary to support the curriculum and meet the needs of the students.

Description of decision-making body or organizational model. Under SCBM, the school council has a lot of authority and responsibility. It must be very clear how the council will be organized. Who will be on the council and for how long? How will people become members of the council? How will the council make decisions? How will it handle money? There are no traditional rules for a school council, so the rules and regulations must be carefully set up so that everyone understands and agrees.

Possible problems and solutions. Every school will have problems when it tries to start SCBM. Some of those problems will be obvious to the proposal writers. For the problems that can be anticipated, the proposal must give some ideas about how to solve them.

Possible waivers and exceptions. Before a community decides to start SCBM, it knows the new roles and responsibilities of the state and the school. Sometimes the community may feel very strongly that a state rule is not right for the school. In that case, the SCBM implementation proposal can ask for a waiver. A waiver is a formal exemption from a rule. The council can ask to be exempt from that rule and explain why they are asking for a waiver.

The HIDOE evaluates each SCBM school plan. They may ask for more information and clarification, or they may approve the plan. When the department approves the plan, the school receives a 1-year budget allocation to carry out the plan. To receive SCBM funding in future years, the school must show that it is operating in agreement with its SCBM plan.

Maintaining SCBM

After the proposal to implement SCBM has been approved, and the initial organization has taken place, there is still a lot of work to be done. The council, which functions as the decision-making body for the school, is a voluntary organization. In other words, members of the council receive no pay. This may be a concern, and the community will need to determine how the council can be rewarded and recognized for its work on behalf of the school. The council should operate by consensus. In other words, any decision that the council makes is one that all parties agree on. The following section describes the organizational model usually used by SCBM schools in the state of Hawai'i.

School Organization

Regular meetings. The school council meets on a regular monthly schedule during the regular school year, unless otherwise specified. Council members must be notified of all meetings, and the date and time of the next regular meeting is determined by the council at its current meeting.

Special meetings. Special meetings may be called by the chairperson. At least 3 days notice must be given before a special meeting is held. Special meetings are open to any interested parties.

Quorum. A quorum for all regular meetings is 50% of the council.

Voting procedures. Each council member has one vote. Decisions are arrived at by consensus. If a full consensus cannot be reached, the fallback procedure is a consensus reached by all the members of the council but one (e.g., an agreement reached by six members of a seven-member council).

Attendance records and minutes. Attendance records and minutes are kept for all regular and special meetings. Written minutes are filed for all meetings and made accessible to the public. The minutes

include but need not be limited to:

- the date, time, and place of meeting,
- lists of members both present and absent,
- the substance of all matters proposed and discussed,
- a record of any decisions made by consensus.

Conclusion: The Promise of SCBM

The purpose of SCBM is to shift much of the decision-making authority from the state to the community. Like the structure of the house, where the foundation supports the smaller things like screens, so the state staff from the central office would be the foundation for the community. They would work together in collaboration with the community members on the school councils to ensure a better education for the children.

As in many other places, the CSSS has been organized as a bureaucracy with authority and power assigned to a set of designated hierarchical positions. It is a systematic way of making decisions from the top down. Does it work best for educating our children? Are we satisfied with the system, or the impact of the system on students' learning today?

Schools are the reflection of the communities in which they exist. For years we have complained and pointed fingers, blaming each other for the problems that we face in our school system. It is time to stop being victims and start taking ownership and responsibility for the future of education at the community level.

At SCBM schools in Hawai'i, the positive impact on the students is great. We can use the Hawai'i model as a guide to help us find out what will really benefit our school system in Chuuk.

There should be only one reason to restructure—for the *students*. We have reached a point in time when radical educational reform is needed to serve our children. SCBM is a way to bring our schools and communities together. Let us strengthen our culture's emphasis on sharing, especially for the betterment of our schools.

For Further Reading

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